MID-NORTH DISTRICT

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A discussion of the history and architectural features of this distinctive area of Chicago, with principles and guidelines for the restoration and renovation of structures within the District

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Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

This publication has been prepared by the staff of the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks preliminary to a proposal by the Commission to the City Council of Chicago that the Mid-North District be designated as a "Chicago Landmark."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Boundaries of the Landmark District	4
Criteria for Landmark Designation	7
History of Mid-North	11
Architecture of Mid-North	19
Buildings of Special Interest*	25
Principles and Guidelines for Preservation	33
Appendix: Zoning in Mid-North	47

INTRODUCTION

The Mid-North District of Chicago is a distinctive area which has evolved over the past hundred years into a thriving inner-city residential neighborhood. A regenerative process has occurred here. In addition, Mid-North has remained relatively free of the generalized decay prevalent near the core areas of many large U.S. cities.

Mid-North was settled in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a middle-class development at the city's northern edge. In later years, it suffered the exodus of many of its residents to the suburbs. By the 1940s, Mid-North had unfortunately declined to the point where it was merely a "stop" for those on their way to a better life outside the city. This trend came to a halt in the early 1950s when new residents joined Mid-North's long-time residents in a commitment to make the area a desirable place to live.

The very qualities which had earlier caused people to leave Mid-North were now seen as desirable. Mid-North no longer seemed "old"; instead it was viewed as an historic neighborhood with a tradition of its own. The old residences, framed by the full-grown trees which line the streets, were fashionable once again. They could be restored to their former elegance and made suitable to contemporary living. Their age and variety provided an interest and warmth that a home in a monotonous new suburban development could not supply. The individual facades displayed the craftsmanship and character of an earlier time.

Mid-North is a cohesive neighborhood. It has an identity and character which make the whole greater than the sum of its individual parts. Mid-North stands in contradiction to the notion that anything old is outmoded and that preservation is contrary to the dictates of progress. In fact, it is the age of Mid-North which gives it a vitality and interest which are, unfortunately, missing from many of Chicago's newer residential neighborhoods.

The purpose of designating the Mid-North District as a "Chicago Landmark" is not to isolate it from the mainstream of Chicago's development and change. To create a static "museum-district" would only serve to destroy Mid-North's significance as an inner-city neighborhood which is just as vital today as it was in the 1870s.

The rejuvenation of Mid-North gives life to Chicago's past and its continued existence illuminates Chicago's heritage in a way that old books and photographs cannot. Landmark designation for the District would recognize not only this, but also the example set by the neighborhood. Mid-North is proof that the inner city, despite its age, need not decay. The District provides an alternative to continual—and today increasingly expensive and ecologically wasteful—clearance and rebuilding. The alternative is conservation.

One of the most striking features of Mid-North is the quality of its architecture.

BOUNDARIES OF THE LANDMARK DISTRICT

The proposed Mid-North District consists of the properties, both public and private, within the following boundaries:

ON THE NORTH

From a point of beginning at the intersection of the west line of North Orchard Street and the south line of the alley next north of and parallel to West Fullerton Parkway;

east along the south line of this alley to the east line of the alley next southwest of and parallel to North Clark Street;

ON THE EAST

southeast along the northeast line of this alley to the north line of West Fullerton Parkway;

east along this north line of West Fullerton Parkway to its intersection with a line coincident with the east property line of 445 West Fullerton Parkway;

south along this east property line, as well as the east property lines of 2347, 2345, 2343, 2339, and 2333 North Cleveland Avenue to the northeast line of the alley next southwest of and parallel to North Clark Street;

southeast along the northeast line of this alley to the northwest property line of 2300-2310 North Clark Street;

northeast along this property line to a point of its coincident intersection with the northeast line of North Clark Street;

southeast along this northeast line of North Clark Street to the north line of West Belden Avenue;

east along this north line of West Belden Avenue to its intersection with a line coincident with the east property line of 341 West Belden Avenue;

south along this property line to the south line of the alley next south of and parallel to West Belden Avenue;

west along the south line of this alley to the east property line of the public property known as the Belden Triangle;

south along this property line to its intersection with the southeast line of North Clark Street;

southeast along this southeast line of North Clark Street to its intersection with the north line of West Webster Avenue;

west along this north line of West Webster Avenue to its intersection with a line coincident with the east property lines of 2159, 2157, 2153, and 2151 North Sedgwick Street;

south along these property lines and continuing southeast along the north, east, and northeast line of the alley next southwest of and parallel to North Clark Street to its intersection with the northwest property line of 2102 North Clark Street;

northeast along this property line to a point of its coincident intersection with the northeast line of North Clark Street;

southeast along this northeast line of North Clark Street to its intersection with the northwest property line of 2117 North Clark Street;

northeast along this property line to the northeast line of this same property;

southeast along this northeast property line and the northeast property lines of 2117, 2115, 2113, 2111, 2109, and 2107 North Clark Street, continuing south along the east property line of 310 West Dickens Avenue to a point of its coincident intersection with the south line of West Dickens Avenue;

west along this south line of West Dickens Avenue to its intersection with the east line of North Orleans Street;

south along this east line of North Orleans Street to its intersection with the south line of West Armitage Avenue;

ON THE SOUTH

west along this south line of West Armitage Avenue to its intersection with a line coincident with the west line of North Sedgwick Street;

ON THE WEST

north along this west line of North Sedgwick Street to its intersection with the south line of West Dickens Avenue;

west along this south line of West Dickens Avenue to its intersection with the northwest line of North Lincoln Avenue;

northwest along this northwest line of North Lincoln Avenue to its intersection with a line coincident with the west line of the alley next west of and parallel to North Cleveland Avenue;

north along the west line of this alley to its intersection with the south line of West Webster Avenue;

west along this south line of West Webster Avenue to its intersection with a line coincident with the west property line of 516 West Webster Avenue;

north along this line and the west property line of 516 West Webster Avenue to its intersection with the south line of the alley next north of and parallel to West Webster Avenue;

west along the south line of this alley to its intersection with a line coincident with the west property line of 529 West Grant Place;

north along this line and the west property line of 529 West Grant Place to its intersection with the south line of West Grant Place;

west along this south line of West Grant Place to its intersection with the east line of North Geneva Terrace;

south along this east line of North Geneva Terrace to its intersection with a line coincident with the south property line of 2220 North Geneva Terrace;

west along this line and the south property line of 2220 North Geneva Terrace to the southwest property line of this same

Mid - North
District

property;

northwest along this southwest property line, continuing along the southwest line of the alley next northeast of and somewhat parallel to North Lincoln Avenue, to its intersection with the south line of the alley next south of and parallel to West Belden Avenue;

west along the south line of this alley to its intersection with the southwest line of the alley next northeast of and parallel to North Lincoln Avenue;

northwest along the southwest line of this alley to its intersection with the south line of West Belden Avenue;

west along this south line of West Belden Avenue to its intersection with the west line of North Orchard Street;

north along this west line of North Orchard Street to the point of beginning.

CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The criteria for designation of a "Chicago Landmark" are set forth in Chapter 21, Section 21-64(b) of the Municipal Code of Chicago. The Mid-North District meets several of the criteria for landmark designation. Most important are:

1. Its character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

The history of Mid-North is closely associated with the early development of Chicago. The land was deeded to the Trustees of the Illinois and Michigan Canal in the 1830s and was annexed to the city in 1847 and 1853. The Chicago Fire of 1871 damaged the eastern portion of the District and Mid-North as we know it today was largely built during the years following the Fire. Perhaps its chief historical significance is its vivid portrayal of the character of the typical Chicago residential neighborhood at the end of the nineteenth century.

2. Its location as a site of a significant historic event.

The northern boundaries of the Chicago Fire are included in the Mid-North District. As the turning point in the city's history, the Fire was a significant event which marked the beginning of modern Chicago.

4. Its exemplification of the cultural, economic, social and historical heritage of the City of Chicago.

Mid-North records in its architecture and in its planning the social and economic conditions which shaped the city from the pre-Fire days to the present.

5. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural type.

Within the boundaries of Mid-North are examples of the typical building types which composed most of Chicago by the year 1900. Included are single family dwellings, town houses, row houses, two- and three-flat buildings, larger apartment buildings, and commercial

Mid-North vividly portrays the character of the City of Chicago at the end of the nineteenth century.

structures. These were all part of the urban environment at the turn of the century and Mid-North provides an excellent cross section of that environment.

6. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

Mid-North contains examples of three architectural styles which were prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century: the Italianate, the Queen Anne, and the Richardsonian Romanesque. In addition, the District chronicles popular building types from the "Chicago cottage" to the row houses of the late nineteenth century to contemporary town houses.

7. Its identification as the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the City of Chicago.

The Ann Halsted house at 440 Belden Avenue was designed by Louis Sullivan, an important Chicago architect who pioneered a modern architectural style in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Another house in the District (2147 Cleveland Avenue) is strongly believed to have been designed by Sullivan as well.

The Richard Bellinger cottage at 2121 Hudson Avenue was designed by W.W. Boyington, an early Chicago architect who also designed the Old Water Tower.

8. Its embodiment of elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant architectural innovation.

The "balloon-frame" structures in Mid-North represent one of the most significant architectural innovations of the early nineteenth century. This adaptation of the heavier New England frame was developed by Augustine D. Taylor of Chicago. Because it substituted lightweight wooden studs, joists, rafters, and purlins for the heavier structural members of the earlier system, this method made it possible to build more quickly and easily. This type of construction eventually did much to enable the settlement of America's West.

Many structures in Mid-North employ standardized building parts and ornament which were marketed by catalogue, another innovation in the art of building which occurred during the nineteenth century.

9. Its relationship to other distinctive areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on an historic, cultural or architectural motif.

Mid-North is a key part of the North Side, a section of the city which contains many other areas of significant residential architecture that may be considered for designation at a later time. The areas immediately to the north, south, and west of Mid-North are eminently suitable for designation.

10. Its unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the City of Chicago.

The distinctive architectural quality of Mid-North, as well as its park-like setting with shaded streets and gardened lawns, create an environment which confirms the desirability of city living. This environment is a well-established and familiar visual feature of the City of Chicago.

HISTORY OF MID-NORTH

In the early nineteenth century, a visitor to what is now Mid-North would have found it a rural area largely covered by forest. Close to the lake, our visitor would have found stretches of grassland made treacherous by occasional patches of quicksand. A series of rutted paths traversed the area. To the east, along a sandy ridge, ran the Green Bay Road (now Clark Street), a former Indian trail which was the main route north to Green Bay, Wisconsin. To the east of Green Bay Road was a swampy area known as the Ten Mile Ditch; it paralleled the lakefront all the way to Gross Point, which was renamed Evanston in 1854. Slightly to the west of the area was Little Fort Road (now Lincoln Avenue), a major road which went as far north as Waukegan.

Mid-North did not remain a wilderness for long. The area was marked for development when it was deeded to the Trustees of the Illinois and Michigan Canal for speculative purposes in the 1830s. Soon the area was studded with farms and an increasing number of country residences. In an era when epidemics were common and Chicago was not noted for its cleanliness, there were practical as well as aesthetic reasons for living away from the central area of the city. That part of Mid-North which is east of Sedgwick Street was incorporated into the city of Chicago in 1847; the remainder of the area followed in 1853. At that time a dirt road euphemistically called Fullerton "Avenue" formed Chicago's northern boundary. North of Fullerton developed the town of Lake View, a popular picnic and resort area.

In 1859, planks and rails were laid along the southern end of Green Bay Road. Horsecars began to trundle down this route, which was the first convenient thoroughfare northward from the city's center. Originally the line ended at Fullerton, but in 1864 the tracks were extended. Soon steam engines (disguised to look like carriages so as not to frighten horses) chugged back and forth, serving the traffic to and from Lake View.

The years passed and the city continued to grow. By 1870, the city's population had soared to 300,000. The North Side, or North Division (an official term designating that part of the city north of the Main Branch and east of the North Branch of the Chicago River) was covered with homes. The area south of Fullerton was subdivided into small truck farms and orchards which provided Chicago with much of its produce.

Near the city's center, the houses were opulent. To the north and west, especially near the riverside industries, the dwellings were extremely modest. Mid-North, having been settled primarily by middle-class families, fell comfortably between the two extremes. Isolated from the rest of the city by the river (which was notoriously difficult to cross as bridges were few in number and inefficient), Mid-North had generally been by-passed by the well-to-do, who could afford either to live close to the center of the city or move farther out into the open countryside. At the same time, its distance from industry had discouraged settlement by the laboring class.

Various institutions were attracted to the area. In the late 1850s, a group of Scottish Presbyterians founded a seminary (today McCormick Theological Seminary) and at about the same time the Chicago Nursery and Half-Orphan Asylum erected buildings on Burling and Halsted streets. Some of Mid-North's earliest residents had the dubious distinction of living on a street named for this latter institution: Asylum Place. (The name was soon changed to Webster Street.) In 1870, the Larabee Street, later renamed Lincoln, School opened its doors.

In 1871, most housing in the city was of balloon-frame construction. Because this type of construction employs light-weight wooden studs, joists, and rafters, these houses could be built very quickly and were so light that they could easily be moved from lot to lot.

On October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire began. Crossing the river, which was so often a frustrating experience for the populace, was no problem for the flames, which were fanned by a strong south wind.

The Bellinger cottage.

Trees, gardens, houses—nearly everything on the North Side was swept away in a matter of hours. Although the Water Tower survived, its pumping station was gutted and the city's hydrants and taps ran dry. The balloon-frame structures burned like so much kindling; some were literally swept off the ground by gusts of superheated air.

At North Avenue the Fire began to abate, primarily because the houses were further apart and also because the residents here had time to take protective measures. They raked dry leaves, tore down wooden fences, ripped up wooden sidewalks, and stored supplies of water which they drew from the Ten Mile Ditch and from ponds on nearby farms. This far north the primary danger was from the rain of sparks and burning debris carried aloft by the updraft generated by the Fire. Wet blankets were draped over buildings but the intense heat quickly dried them out. Sand from the Clark Street ridge was used to smother flames and to bury objects of value. It is said that Policeman Richard Bellinger waited for flying sparks to fall on his roof and then doused each individually, thus saving his newly-built home on Hudson Avenue. According to legend, when he ran out of water he used the cider he had stored in his basement.

The Fire died out near Fullerton Avenue. It is impossible to determine the exact boundaries of the burned area. According to some accounts, the last structure to burn was the Huck House, located near the northeast corner of Clark and Fullerton. It is a matter of record, however, that some houses as far north as Lake View were set afire by flying sparks. At least four structures in the Mid-North District survived: the Bellinger cottage and a series of three structures located between what are now numbers 2333 and 2343 Cleveland. Two houses of this series still stand.

Most of the South and North sides, including the central business district, were destroyed by the Fire. Some thought Chicago would never recover. But the city's strategic location and economic importance still existed; so did the renowned drive of its populace. One resident, walking through the smoking ruins, said "Chicago will have more men, more money, more business within five years than she would have had without the Fire." And he was right.

Stringent fire codes went into effect almost immediately after the Fire. A "fire limits" boundary, within which no wooden structure could be built, was established around the central business district. These limits did not extend to Mid-North, however. The first new structures built in Mid-North after the Fire were of

wood and practically indistinguishable from their predecessors.

Mid-North remained predominantly middle-class after the Fire. Although a few prosperous people built new homes in the area, the wealthy chose to build their homes on and around Prairie Avenue on the near South Side.

Mid-North was less pastoral now. Substantial structures began to appear and masonry construction became more common. Row houses were built and gave the area a more urban character. The year 1874 was a key one for Mid-North. At that time, after another fire, the fire limits were extended to include the present district. This precipitated a building boom outside the fire limits, where developers could still build inexpensive houses of wood. Mid-North was spared this type of large-scale, low-priced development. Instead it was built up gradually by individuals and small entrepeneurs who constructed, more often than not, buildings of high quality.

In the late 1870s, urbanization increased. New structures in the District were situated closer together than their predecessors and the area began to have a truly urban character. Horsecar lines were extended up Sedgwick Street and the former Little Fort Road, which had been renamed Lincoln Avenue in honor of the late President. Tracks were laid on Armitage, Webster, and Dickens avenues, and carbarns and stables were built at Lincoln and Larabee. Streets were paved with wooden blocks, stone, or brick. That section of the Ten-Mile Ditch directly to the east of the District had long been euphemistically dubbed "Lincoln Park" and now landfill was used to develop it into a real park with an embankment along the lake and a carriage route named Lake Shore Drive.

German, Scandinavian, and Scottish families predominated in the area. A random sampling from the City Directory of 1885 shows that most of Mid-North's residents were involved in such occupations as shopkeeping, bookkeeping, and clerking. The institutions in the area, notably the German Hospital (renamed Grant during World War I), also attracted employees from the area. One of Mid-North's most colorful characters was Paul Du Chaillou, who was rumored to have been the first Westerner to see a pygmy or a gorilla. He occasionally stayed with his friend John Anderson, who lived at what is now 2339 Cleveland. Du Chaillou was later fatally poisoned while dining with the Czar of Russia.

The City Directory also reveals that large families often lived together even after the children were married and had families of their own. In some cases, one family group would occupy several adjacent buildings. The Kempers, for example, occupied so many houses on one block that the street was eventually named after them.

These row houses are typical of the kind that began to appear in the late nineteenth century, giving Mid-North an urban character.

In 1893, the city's attention was focused on the World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park. The Fair presented to the world the vision of a "White City," with white, neo-Classical edifices amidst beautifully landscaped grounds. One beneficial effect of the Fair was a renewed interest in landscaping and city improvement. As a result, Fullerton Avenue became a parkway and was placed under the control of the Lincoln Park Commissioners.

By 1893, the Mid-North District was well within the built-up part of the city. In 1889, and again in 1893, major suburban annexations had increased Chicago's area to 185 square miles; the population now passed the million mark. With the exception of a few outlying areas which were later annexed, the city's boundaries have changed little since that time. Included in the 1889 annexation was the town of Lake View, a small portion of which is within the Mid-North District.

Public transportation on the North Side remained primitive, totally dependent on slow and outmoded horsecars, until 1888. In that year, after most other areas of the city had been equipped with them, cablecars first traveled down Clark Street. Shortly thereafter, cables were run under Lincoln Avenue and the horsecars were relegated to various short feeder lines. To avoid the delays caused by raised bridges, cablecars serving the North Side crossed the river via a tunnel at LaSalle Street.

Soon the cablecar gave way to the electric street railway and the elevated. Elevated trains brought important changes to the areas they served. They stimulated the development of the suburbs; the population density increased as housing became less expensive along their routes. The first elevated cars began serving the North Side with the opening of the Northwestern Elevated Railroad in 1900, hinting the decline of Mid-North. By 1912, these trains were serving the northern suburbs all the way to Wilmette. Now that people could comfortably commute from the suburbs, they began to move in great numbers out of the noisy, crowded inner city.

Mid-North did not deteriorate as badly as surrounding areas. Because of the many institutions in Mid-North, a relatively large number of original settlers remained. In addition, the area attracted as new residents various professionals interested in its substantial houses; retired people attracted by its low rents; and others who found its location convenient.

Although there were few additional single-family houses built in the District, new construction continued in the form of three- and four-story walk-up apartment buildings. Many fine old homes were converted into multi-flat dwellings or rooming houses.

During the 1920s, a minor rash of remodelling occurred as ornate gingerbread porches on some of the buildings were replaced by sturdier brick ones. Major remodelling began in the 1930s. At that time 2150 Cleveland acquired a spectacular Art Deco facade.

In the 1940s, Chicago and other large cities across the nation began to experience an exodus of the middle class to the suburbs. However, many individuals, bucking this general trend, began to move into the Mid-North District. In increasing numbers, these individuals strove to restore rather than remodel their homes.

Unfortunately, "modernity" was the battle cry of the fifties and the neighborhood was deluged by a flood of salesmen selling false cut-stone fronts, picture windows, concrete porches with flimsy iron railings, aluminum awnings, and imitation brick asphalt siding. In some cases, the remodelling was tastefully done, or at least inconspicuously; in other cases, it was disastrous.

By this time, the automobile was a primary factor in city planning. Lake Shore Drive (no longer, needless to say, a pleasure drive, but practically an expressway) was given an exit ramp at Fullerton Parkway. Fullerton thus

(Opposite page) The tree-lined streets and unified facades of Mid-North create a pleasant urban residential neighborhood.

Architectural diversity characterizes this charming block of Cleveland Avenue.

became a major east-west thoroughfare, a condition for which it was manifestly unsuited. The situation was made worse a few years later when another exit from the new Northwest Expressway increased traffic even more. Consequently, in 1959, Fullerton was taken from the jurisdiction of the Park District and became a parkway in name only. Soon many of the trees which arched gracefully overhead were chopped down to make way for an "improved" wider thoroughfare for automobiles.

A new danger to the District, and to the entire city, was inexpensive construction which took advantage of gaps in the building code. The "four-plus-one," with a ground floor reserved for parking and four apartment floors above, is an example of this type of inexpensive construction. The neighborhood by this time, however, was organized to meet the onslaught of questionable development. The new residents, along with the old, had not remained isolated; the Lincoln Park Conservation Association and the Mid-North Association had been organized to protect and promote the area. The City of Chicago supported the restoration of Mid-North by placing it in one of the earliest urban renewal conservation districts.

Preliminary investigations made by the Department of Urban Renewal indicate that the buildings in the area are, with few exceptions, in very good condition. The residents of the area are today making many notable restoration and improvement efforts. While some misguided attempts at modernization have destroyed the original character of some buildings in the area, these remodellings are the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, these buildings are not very obtrusive. The landscaping around the buildings is also of high quality. That Mid-North is especially proud of its gardens is evidenced by the pictorial publication *City in a Garden.*

Today, Mid-North is a popular place to live. If anything, the area is becoming too popular, and steadily increasing rents present the danger that many stable families and businesses may be forced to move out. The pressure from developers has increased recently because of the greater profit which can be made from high-rise construction in the area. Paradoxically, the popularity of the area is due to the very characteristics (quiet atmosphere, small scale, charming older residences) which high rises generally obliterate. The disastrous over-development and over-exploitation of other nearby neighborhoods may provide a strong enough lesson to Mid-North that the District will be saved for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

ARCHITECTURE OF MID-NORTH

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, when Mid-North was acquiring its present architectural character, three architectural styles were widely employed for residential construction in the District. The earliest of these, the Italianate Style, had been popular throughout the country during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. The Queen Anne Style became popular during the late 1870s and in the next decade the Richardsonian Romanesque came into vogue. Mid-North has many fine examples of each of these styles.

The earliest residences in Mid-North were built by middle-class families for their own use; the "Chicago cottages" and early town houses of Mid-North were generally owner-built and -occupied. As the population of Mid-North grew, developers became interested in the area and began to build row houses and small apartment buildings. Because these structures were not built with specific occupants in mind, they are less individualized than most single-family construction. In fact, these buildings were often extremely simple and straightforward; "style" was frequently nothing more than a few pieces of ready-made ornament applied to an otherwise plain facade.

Most of the buildings in Mid-North, whether owner or developer built, were to some extent "ready-made." Buildings were often designed simply by picking plans and ornamental details from standard books and catalogues. Consequently, one often sees identical lintels, doorways, cornices, and ornamental panels throughout Mid-North. Built of standardized parts, the buildings are, in effect, variations upon basic stylistic and structural patterns.

The earliest houses in Mid-North were of wood and had Italianate details. No frame buildings were built after 1874, when the city building code forbade all wood construction within the city limits. The early frame buildings of Mid-North are among the only surviving examples in Chicago of balloon-frame construction, a building method which employed standardized lumber and mass-produced, inexpensive nails. Balloon-frame buildings were highly flammable—an immense disadvantage, especially in the days of kerosene and gas lamps and wood-burning stoves and fireplaces. Although this type of construction is still occasionally used where building codes permit, it has generally been superseded by other forms of light wood construction, such as platform (also called Western) framing.

An Italianate residence with flat-arched window openings and ornamented cornice.

The frame houses were so light in weight that when their owners decided to erect more substantial structures, the balloon frame buildings were often moved to the back of the lot to serve as additional family space, servant quarters, stables, or rental houses.

This boldly projecting cornice with elaborately carved brackets is typical of the Italianate Style.

The foundations of these houses were usually of brick or stone; concrete was not generally used until the 1890s. The foundations were often rather high, necessitating a long flight of steps leading to the first floor, which was sometimes as high as five feet above grade. There are two reasons for this rather curious feature. First, Chicago, because of its proximity to the lake and its sandy soil, has a relatively high water table and any deep basement excavation introduces serious seepage problems. It was consequently best to raise basements as high as possible. The other reason for the high first floor was that during the nineteenth century the city periodically raised the levels of its streets. When this happened, homeowners occasionally found their sidewalks, streets, and front yards in a ditch. Practical homeowners soon began constructing their new homes with first floors high above grade level, so that if the streets were raised they needed only to shorten the flight of steps which led to the entrance. Thus the rather awkward-looking structure known as the "Chicago cottage" was born. The high basements were often used as extra living space or were rented.

The early frame residences are generally rectangular in shape, with peaked gable roofs and horizontal wooden siding or, occasionally, shingles. Decorative details were derived from the Italianate Style. This style is characterized by broadly projecting roof overhangs, elaborately carved brackets which support the roof overhangs, and window and door openings (often arched) topped by ornate lintels. Some or all of these features can be found on many of the frame residences in Mid-North.

After 1874, the Italianate Style was employed in much of the masonry construction which then prevailed in Mid-North. The earliest masonry buildings were flat fronts, which are two-story brick structures with stone or brick lintels, a cornice, and (as the name implies) a flat front facade. These structures, because of their economy and simple construction, were popular through the 1880s. Significantly, from the very beginning, these houses often had common side walls, forming row houses. The row house is still, in the opinion of many, one of the most efficient forms of urban housing. In fact, row houses form some of the best contemporary construction in Mid-North.

The earliest flat fronts were built of rough common brick as opposed to face brick, which is more uniform in color, texture, and shape. Face brick examples do exist, however, as do structures of sandstone and limestone. Generally these dwellings were decorated with elaborate lintels, usually of stone, and were topped by fairly elaborate metal cornices, which provide a visual end to the vertical lines of the building and also keep rainwater off the facade. Most flat fronts in the area have high basements and long front staircases, similar to those found on the "Chicago cottages."

A Queen Anne residence with stepped Dutch gable roof and decorative brickwork.

Bay front structures seem to have appeared very soon after the flat fronts. They are also often combined into rows and closely resemble the flat fronts except, of course, for their bay windows. These bays are usually polygonal although examples of both rectangular and curved bays do exist. Although not a Chicago invention, the bay window was practically a trademark of many Chicago buildings, from modest cottages to the early skyscrapers of the late nineteenth century. The great advantage of the bay window in both homes and offices was that it admitted a maximum amount of light and air.

While many of the flat and bay front buildings display Italianate detail, others are Queen Anne in style. The Queen Anne Style developed in England in the late 1860s and was introduced into this country at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. It was used for residential construction through the end of the nineteenth century.

Queen Anne facades display a rich variety of color and texture. Brick is often contrasted with wood trim; ornamental bands of contrasting color run across the facades; and further variety is added by the use of ornamental brickwork plaques of foliate, floral, or sunburst patterns. Quite often windows have plate glass in their lower halves and leaded or stained glass above. Various types of roofs are employed, including fanciful stepped Dutch gable roofs. Ornamental detail is generally classical and tends to be small in scale.

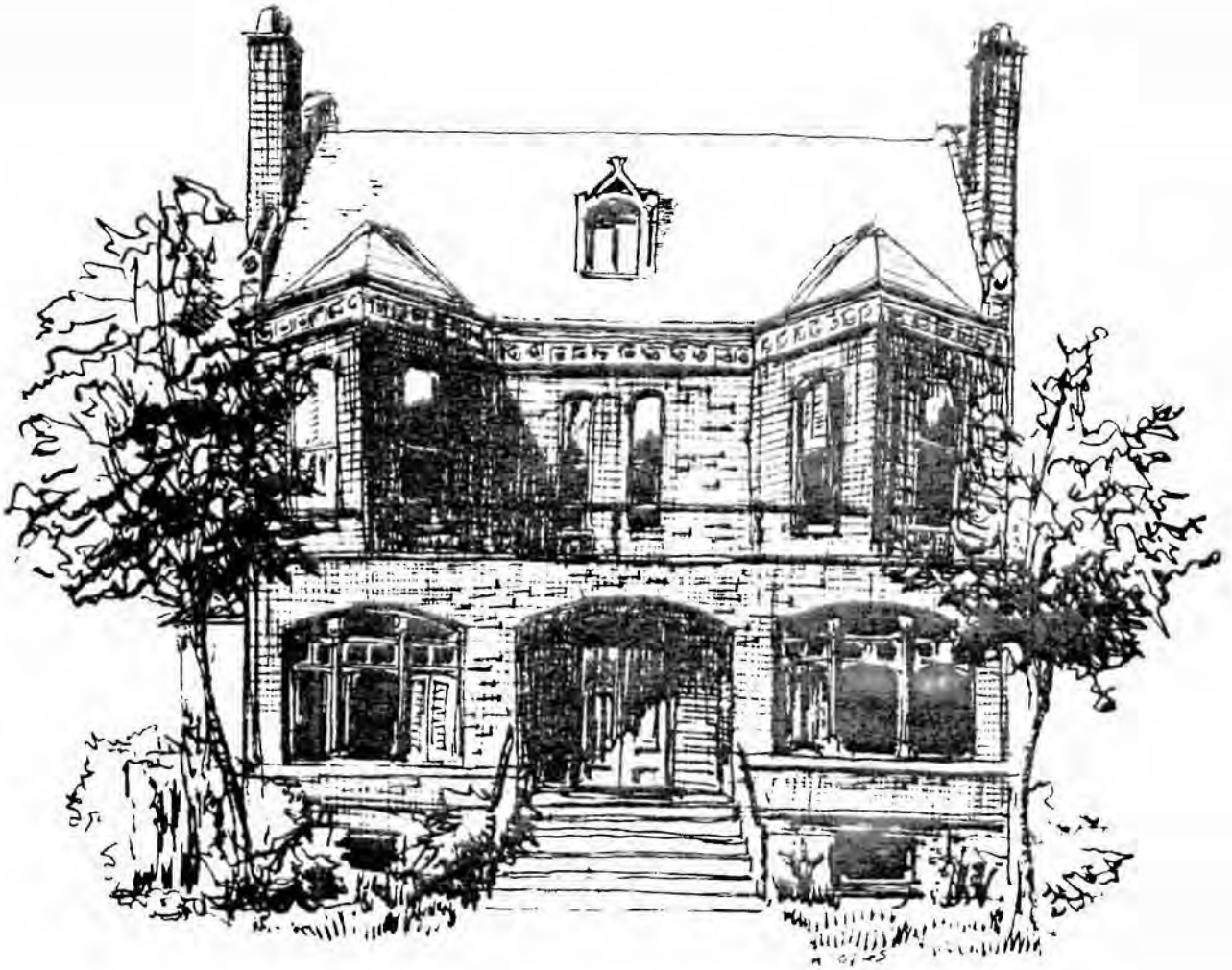
These town houses display the rich variety of color and texture found on Queen Anne facades. Note the use of leaded glass in the windows.

The Queen Anne Style gave way in the late 1880s to the Richardsonian Romanesque Style. The Richardsonian Romanesque Style derives from the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, one of the foremost American architects of the nineteenth century. In the 1870s, Richardson developed a distinctive architectural style which employed round arches, rough-faced masonry, and slit-like window openings. Buildings in this style seem massive and heavy. They quite often have porches, with either round or Syrian arches. Granite was used in many buildings of this style; however, in Mid-North, limestone and sandstone were more typical.

The Richardsonian Romanesque was introduced into Chicago by Richardson himself. In the 1880s he designed three buildings in the city: the Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1885-87) and the Franklin MacVeagh house on Lake Shore Drive (1885-87), both demolished; and the J.J. Glessner house on Prairie Avenue (1886-87), which survives. Once the style became popular, it was used for residences in Mid-North through the early twentieth century.

Examples of other architectural styles exist in Mid-North, however, the prevailing architectural character of the District results from a blend of the Italianate, Queen Anne, and Richardsonian Romanesque styles.

The building at 540 Belden Avenue *(right)* displays the arched window openings and rough faced masonry facade characteristic of the Richardsonian Romanesque.



BUILDINGS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

One of the most significant elements of Mid-North, and certainly its major visual feature, is the ensemble created by the individual buildings in the District. Some of these buildings have the further distinction of being architecturally or historically significant. The following discussion of buildings of special interest in Mid-North has of necessity been limited to the most notable examples of a style or period.

The Bellinger Cottage

Probably the most famous single structure in Mid-North is the Bellinger cottage at 2121 Hudson Avenue. The cottage is one of the few buildings in the area that survived the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

The building is a relatively modest "Chicago cottage" of frame construction. Its decorative shingles, dentils, brackets, and parapet make it more ornate than some other surviving examples of this building type. By a remarkable coincidence, the Bellinger cottage was designed in 1869 by W.W. Boyington, who was also the architect of the Old Chicago Water Tower, another building which survived the holocaust of 1871.

Policeman Richard Bellinger and his bride had occupied their residence only a short time when the Chicago Fire occurred. Because the Fire started on the South Side, the residents of the North Side had time to prepare for the onslaught. Bellinger, working with his brother-in-law, cleared all flammable materials such as leaves, fences, and wooden sidewalks away from the house, which stood on a relatively large lot. As the Fire approached the area, there was a constant rain of sparks and burning debris, which some observers compared to a snowstorm. Bellinger drew water from the Ten Mile Ditch and nearby ponds. He knew that he had to use his supply economically. He and his brother-in-law stood guard on the roof and at other vulnerable parts of the building and doused each flaming particle that landed, instead of attempting, as most people apparently did, to keep the whole building wet. Although they suffered exhaustion and burns, the Bellingers finally managed to save their home, while all the surrounding structures were burned. Immediately after the Fire, the Bellingers housed no fewer than twenty-one of their burned-out neighbors.

A charming legend that developed after the Fire had the Bellingers running out of water and putting out the flames with ladles full of cider from their basement. Around 1915, however, Bellinger's widow announced that the legend was merely that and nothing more.

The Bellinger cottage still stands isolated from its neighbors, surrounded by a large garden. The original entranceway at the high first floor, reached by the usual flight of steps, has been replaced by a ground-floor entry. The building stands today as a monument to the courage, determination, and ingenuity of one Richard Bellinger, policeman. *(Photo on page 12)*

2339 Cleveland Avenue

Another structure which predates the Chicago Fire, this two-story house was standing as early as 1866, according to old Chicago tract books. It is one of an original group of three identical buildings, of which 2343 Cleveland Avenue is still standing and 2333 has been demolished.

It is not really possible to say that this house "survived" the Chicago Fire. The boundaries of the burned area this far north are very difficult to establish. This house probably stood outside the burned area and was damaged exclusively by the hail of flying sparks and burning debris. According to the second-hand recollections of one of the area's earliest residents, the flaming material falling on this house

This residence at 2339 Cleveland predates the Chicago Fire of 1871.

was extinguished by throwing sand on it. The story continues that the practical residents later gathered the burned pieces and used them to smoke ham and bacon.

This building has been altered over the years. Around 1919, the original porch was removed and replaced, but in the 1960s the owners of the building installed a new porch closely resembling the one in an early photograph of the house.

Some years after the Fire, the house at 2333 Cleveland Avenue was purchased by John Anderson, who had it torn down in 1890 and replaced with the building currently on the site. In 1902 Anderson purchased the other two buildings and installed his son and daughter and their families in 2339 and his architect in 2343.

Anderson was the publisher of the *Scandinavian*, a popular Swedish newspaper, and his own house at 2333 Cleveland was a gathering place for Scandinavian-American writers and politicians. A friend of the Andersons was Paul Du Chaillou, a writer, adventurer, and explorer who occasionally lectured to the students at Lincoln School, illustrating his talks with artifacts and animal skins gathered on his travels.

The Ann Halsted house at 440 Belden Avenue was designed by Louis Sullivan in 1883. It is one of Sullivan's earliest extant buildings.

The Ann Halsted House

The Ann Halsted house at 440 Belden Avenue was built in 1883 and stands today as one of the oldest extant works of the architectural partnership of Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan. It is also their oldest residential commission. It was built as a home for Ann Halsted, the widow of a sea captain. An 1883 issue of the *American Architect* sets the cost of this large, three-story, red brick residence at $15,000.

The Halsted house documents the early, rather experimental style of Adler and Sullivan. Just a few years later, this firm was to create such Chicago masterpieces as the Auditorium Theater, the Garrick Theater, and the Old Chicago Stock Exchange. At the time the Halsted house was built, Louis Sullivan, then twenty-seven years old, had been in partnership with Dankmar Adler for only a few years and it is impossible to determine exactly what role he played in the design of the house. The plans bear the name "D. Adler & Co.," which seems to indicate that the plans were drawn before Adler made Sullivan a full partner.

The design of the Halsted house is both typical of the 1880s and innovative for the period. For example, the non-classical, elaborately corbeled brickwork crowning the east and west gables derives primarily from conventional Queen Anne design of the 1880s—a style that favored picturesque design rather than classicism. On the other hand, the front elevation is strikingly classical in its strict symmetry, which may derive from Sullivan's training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

The decorative details are clearly Sullivan's. One curious ornamental form repeated frequently in Sullivan's designs of the early 1880s is a spreading lotus flower surmounting a long stem—presumably Egyptian in inspiration. In the Halsted house this motif is incorporated into the small iron pediments crowning the gables. Some of the windows originally had ornamentation on their arched upper sashes,

The decorative brickwork on the west gable of the Halsted house derives from the Queen Anne Style.

but these details have long since disappeared. The design of the leaded glass which remains in the entranceway and staircase hall is obviously immature compared to Sullivan's later achievements, but is nevertheless very bold and striking.

As one of the few remaining works of Adler and Sullivan and as one of the best examples of their early residential style, the Halsted house is clearly significant architecturally.

2147 Cleveland Avenue

This unique two-story, red brick residence may have been designed by Louis Sullivan. To date, however, no conclusive evidence has been found either to prove or

disprove this possibility. Records in the Chicago Building Department indicate that building permits for the property were issued to a Dr. J. Simpson in 1881 and 1883, but any detailed information as to what occurred then has long since disappeared. The records of the office of Adler and Sullivan are also, unfortunately, very incomplete. In any case, this house was constructed during the early years of Sullivan's career, before he had developed an unmistakable style.

This residence at 2147 Cleveland Avenue may have been designed by Louis Sullivan.

The total composition is rather awkward, but this may be partially due to some kind of remodelling, such as the removal of an original porch, cornice, or balustrade. The ornamentation, especially the Egyptian-looking palmetto patterns and the basement window grills, is rather similar to Sullivan's Troescher Building of 1884, which still stands at 15 South Wacker Drive. The triangular bay was often used by Adler and Sullivan in their early residential commissions, as, for example, in the Halsted house a few blocks away. There is, of course, the possibility that the house was designed by a friend or imitator of Sullivan's The house stands as an extremely interesting, although not altogether successful, early attempt to create something new in the field of residential architecture.

2314 Cleveland Avenue

This delightful residence dates from the late 1870s or early 1880s. Constructed of red brick with white stone trim, the house is riotously eclectic in design, combining elements of High Victorian Gothic Style in its pointed arches, Second Empire Style in its mansard roof, and Queen Anne Style in its use of polychromy and materials of contrasting texture. Of particular interest is the roof, with its elaborate moldings, gabled dormer, and decorative ironwork. The porch, with its Ionic columns and "Colonial" appearance, is probably a later addition.

2103-2117 North Clark Street and 310-312 Dickens Avenue

This series of nine townhouses was designed about 1898 by Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Silsbee was a prominent late-nineteenth century Chicago architect who is perhaps best remembered as the first employer of Frank Lloyd Wright.

2103-2117 North Clark Street and 310-312 Dickens Avenue.

During his career, Silsbee worked in many of the popular revival styles of the time. These town houses document Silsbee's transition from the Queen Anne to the Colonial Revival style. Elements of both styles are to be found in the buildings. Constructed of brownstone and brick, the town houses are well proportioned and contrast nicely with some of the more elaborate designs in Mid-North.

2150 Cleveland Avenue

This building is a fine example of remodelling done in the Art Deco Style of the 1920s and 30s. In an attempt to upgrade the neighborhood in the early years of the Depression, the original facade of the building was removed and the present buff-colored brick facade was added. Especially noteworthy are the spectacular geometrically patterned leaded glass windows, one of which rises two stories in height. The blocky, geometric massing of the building is typical of the Art Deco Style. Also typical is the treatment of the corners, which are angled off with a stepped brickwork pattern to eliminate any sharp right angle corners. The Art Deco Style today is recognized as a significant period style. Although the style was employed in various large skyscrapers of the time, such as the Board of Trade Building, the LaSalle-Wacker Building, and the Civic Opera

An Art Deco facade was added to 2150 Cleveland *(right)* in the 1930s.

House, its cubist forms and geometric ornamentation were seldom employed in residential construction in Chicago.

It is said that Irene Castle, of the famous dancing team of Vernon and Irene Castle, once lived in this house. The building today lends an interesting architectural variety to this block of Cleveland Avenue.

540 Belden Avenue

This building is a fine example of the Richardsonian Romanesque Style adapted to a dense urban situation. The building is a two-unit town house designed to resemble a single-family residence. The double entranceway is the only feature which expresses the separation of the two units. The building is constructed of yellow sandstone laid in large, rough-hewn blocks, a hallmark of the Richardsonian Romanesque. As an interesting contrast, the trim and carved inlay patterns are of red sandstone. The asymmetry of the two units is especially noteworthy. In contrast to the regularity and repetition of conventional multiple-unit dwellings, this building has a picturesque and freely composed double facade, an expression of late nineteenth-century dissatisfaction with the formalism of neo-Classical architecture. The architect has managed to fit this highly individualized building into the overall context of the street. _ *(Photo on page 22)*

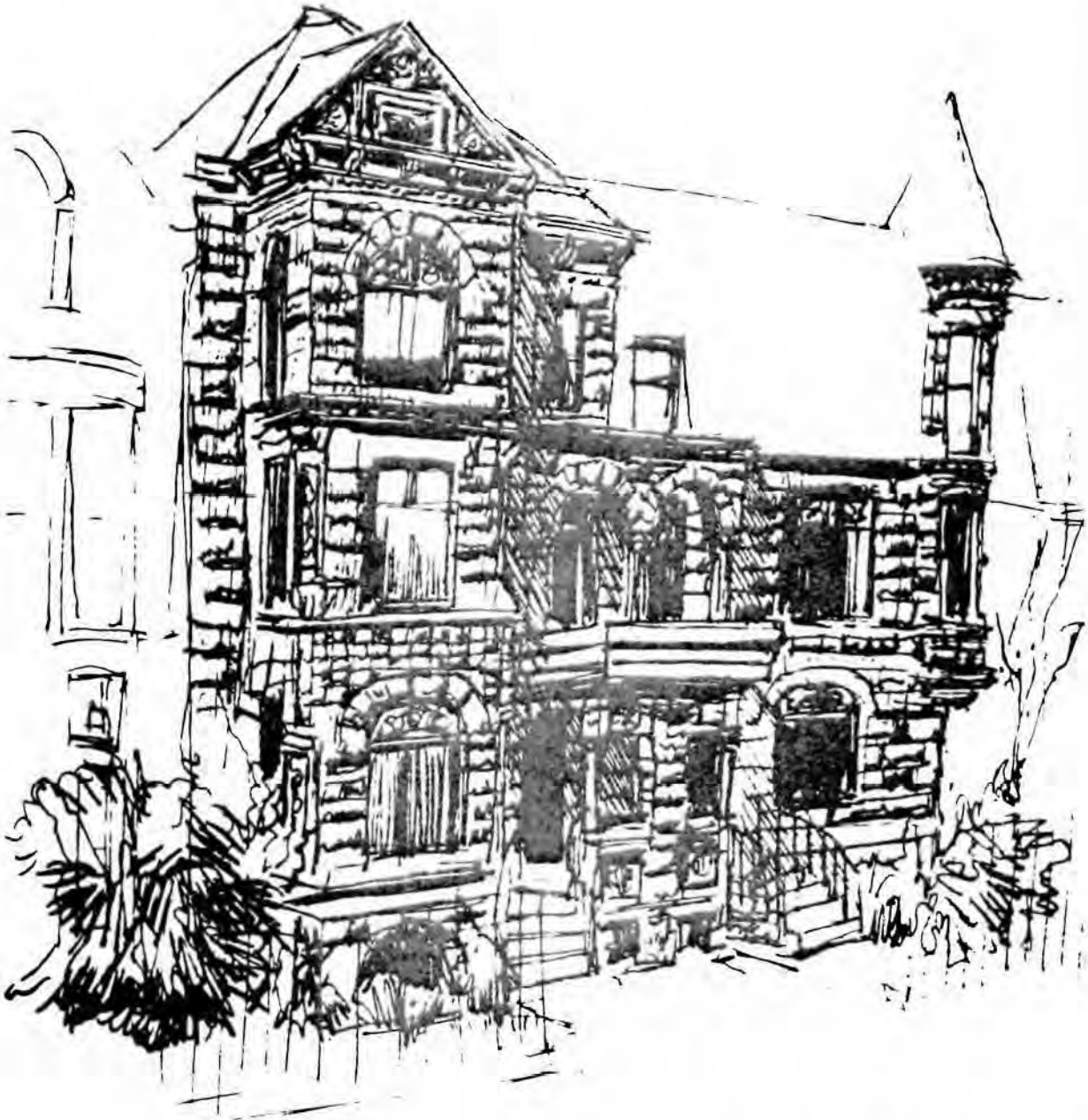
The Pelham Apartments

This large apartment building at 2102 North Clark Street is a good example of apartment construction in Mid-North. The building was built around 1891 from designs by an architect who is at present unknown. Its modified Tudor design is unusual in Mid-North.

The Cobden Apartments at Belden Avenue and Clark Street.

The Cobden Apartments

The Cobden, located at the northwest corner of Belden Avenue and Clark Street, is another excellent example of apartment construction in Mid-North. It is a Flemish style building of brownstone, brick, and terra cotta. The handsome detailing and striking massing of the Belden Avenue facade are crowned by an elaborate Flemish gable. The building may have been designed by Charles Frost, the architect who designed the old LaSalle Street Station.



PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION

These principles and guidelines are based on a composite of the individual buildings in the Mid-North District. While no single building model predominates in Mid-North, there do exist strong similarities of style, proportion, scale, material and detail. These similarities form the basis of the following general discussion. This type of general discussion will be helpful in understanding the architectural qualities of Mid-North and this understanding, in turn, will establish a good foundation for future planning in the District.

Rather than climaxing preservation efforts, the designation of the Mid-North District as a "Chicago Landmark" is but the beginning of the work. The purpose of designation is to encourage architectural preservation and design excellence and to assure that renovation efforts and new development harmonize with existing street patterns and building design. Ultimately the goal of designation is to assure that Chicago's heritage will remain a functioning asset to owner and community alike through continued use and enjoyment.

Although stationary, buildings are not static. It is necessary that they function today as they functioned a century ago and, indeed, should function a century hence. Change is inevitable. As buildings age, they need maintenance and repair or alteration to accommodate new occupants and uses. This maintenance and change can and should be a compromise between yesterday and today, at once to insure the architectural integrity of the buildings and at the same time to enhance their utility. Preservation seeks both ends.

What is preservation? It is not the work of a brick-and mortar taxidermist creating static museums. Preservation continues the life of the resources of the past.

Preservation efforts should conserve the best of the past in order to enrich the present and the future. Preservation seeks quality in the urban environment.

The Mid-North District includes approximately 480 buildings (mostly residential), the greatest number of them constructed between 1871 and 1900. Today, Mid-North is a prospering residential neighborhood which exemplifies the aesthetic and practical values of preservation. Mid-North flourishes today because of preservation and renewal efforts within the community. The designation of the District as a "Chicago Landmark" will complement these continuing efforts.

The responsibilities of the Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks are set forth in Chapter 21, Section 21-64 of the Municipal Code of Chicago. The Commission's first responsibility is to recommend to the City Council of Chicago that certain "areas, places, buildings, structures, works of art and other objects having a special historical, community, or aesthetic interest or value" be officially designated as a "Chicago Landmark." Once the City Council has approved the recommendation of the Commission and designates the "Chicago Landmark," it becomes the responsibility of the Commission to ensure the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation and perpetuation" of the landmark. One of the ways the Commission does this is by reviewing all applications for building permits which affect designated landmarks.

Building permits are issued by the Department of Buildings and are required for all new construction, remodelling, and major alterations in the city. A building permit is needed in order to: build or add a garage or breezeway; add dormers or bay windows; finish off attic or basement spaces; replace, enclose, or heat existing porches or build new porches; replace existing masonry or roof structures; replace or add siding or replace existing siding with masonry veneer or face brick; or to completely modernize or convert a structure. Building fences over five feet high; changing from single family to multiple family use; making structural changes which result in a larger building area; installing boilers; wrecking a building; erecting a chimney—these also require a building permit.

A building permit must also be secured in order to

construct or alter plumbing systems; to install, replace, or extend warm air furnaces; to construct, alter or add ventilation facilities; and to build mechanical, supply or exhaust ventilation systems. Other changes which require a permit are: shoring, raising, underpinning, or moving any building; removing, erecting or altering a fire escape; erecting tanks or metal structures above any roof or tower; and installing tanks for flammable liquids.

A building permit is not required for any minor repairs that may be necessary to maintain existing parts of a building or plumbing system as long as such work does not involve the replacement or repair of any structural load bearing members nor reduce the means of exit; affect the light or ventilation, room size requirements, sanitary or fire-resistive requirements; use materials not permitted by the building code; nor increase the height or capacity of a building. As this list is not comprehensive, the Department of Buildings may always be consulted about the necessity of a permit for other changes.

Because the Mid-North District is part of the Lincoln Park Conservation Area, all applications for building permits will be forwarded to the Department of Urban Renewal for their review. After the Department of Urban Renewal has reviewed the application, it will be forwarded to the Landmark Commission for their perusal. The Commission will determine whether the proposed work "is of a nature which will not adversely affect any significant historical or architectural feature" of the landmark. Once the Commission has approved the application, the Building Department will review it to ensure that the proposed work does not violate the building code. After the Building Department has approved the application, a building permit is issued and work can begin.

The Commission is concerned primarily with the exteriors of buildings and the environment they create. Street facades and those other portions of buildings visible from the public way are of specific concern. Realizing that interior changes frequently are required in order to assure the continued life of a building, the Commission is not specifically concerned with interior alterations except insofar as they affect the exterior of the building.

To legislate guidelines for preservation and future development within Mid-North is neither feasible not desirable. The Commission will safeguard against drastic developments that threaten the character of the Mid-North District. To dictate "this color of paint" or "that kind of window," however, would run counter to the purpose of landmark designation.

More properly, guidelines should evolve through an understanding of the architecture and development of Mid-North. This kind of understanding will result in a flexible set of guidelines, which will allow for the continuity of the District while permitting adaptations required for growth and current needs. Rigid rules would only stifle the vitality of Mid-North.

ABOUT THE BUILDINGS

The streetscapes of Mid-North display a rich variety of design and texture united by several common elements. These elements are: height, proportion and scale, window and door openings, building materials and methods, and width of setback from the street. These elements create continuous rhythms throughout the District. Alterations and new development should harmonize with these existing rhythms.

Height The average height of buildings in the District is 2 1/2 stories, usually consisting of a high ground floor with two main stories above.

Proportion and scale The heights of most buildings in Mid-North are generally at least one and a half times as great as their widths. The primary emphasis is consequently vertical. Scale, which is the relationship of the size of

individual parts to one another and to man, is gauged by the building units (brick or stone), the window and door openings and their placement, and the architectural detailing. Most of the buildings in Mid-North have a consistent scale.

Window and door openings Window and door openings are vertical, reflecting the overall proportions of the buildings. These openings create voids in the wall plane and the resulting relationship of solid to void creates a strong rhythm along the streetscape. There are two basic patterns of solid and void relationship: that seen in flat front buildings and that seen in bay fronts.

Entrances Door openings are placed at the main floor level (often considered the second floor today) and are reached by a tall flight of steps. Most often entrances are not sheltered.

Materials and details Common and red face brick with raked mortar joints and sandstone and limestone trim are used extensively in the District. Roofs are generally flat and have projecting cornices. False mansards and gables are also found in the District.

Building placement The streetscapes in Mid-North are composed of a rather random progression of building units. Single and double units quite often appear next to rows consisting of four and five units. Narrow gangways provide voids in the streetscapes.

Street facades Buildings are set back a uniform distance from the curb line by parkways planted with trees, sidewalks, and narrow front lawns. This pattern creates a continuous wall on either side of the street.

Just as brick and stone are the units with which buildings are constructed, the buildings themselves become the individual units which compose a district. The earliest structures in Mid-North were single-family dwellings of frame construction, generally in the cottage style. These were later translated into brick. As Mid-North became more urban, town houses and apartment buildings were added. Although row houses and duplexes are to be found in Mid-North, many residences are free-standing buildings separated one from another by long narrow gangways. Their fronts are parallel to the street. Three major building types predominate in Mid-North: the cottage, the flat front, and the bay front.

While isolated examples of more sophisticated frame structures do survive, the most common type of frame construction in Chicago is the cottage. Of rather small dimensions, the cottage is built on a high ground floor of common brick. Quite often, the ground floor was rented out to provide additional income to the owner living above. Upon the brick foundation rests the balloon frame of the building proper. The frame is most often sheathed in clapboard—long, narrow, horizontal, overlapping boards.

The cottage is generally one and a half, but sometimes two and a half, stories high, crowned by a pitched roof whose gable ends face front and rear. A broad flight of steps links the sidewalk and first floor levels. The entrance is at either the right or left side of the first floor and has two windows next to it. A second story would have three windows above the three openings on the first floor. Often centered in the gable ends are more ornate windows lighting the attic story.

The chief architectural characteristic of the cottage is its very "unarchitectural" simplicity. Ornamentation is usually limited to the surrounds of window and door openings and the over-hanging eaves. Occasionally the eaves are more ornate, sometimes having dentils and brackets and sometimes decorated with intricately sawn bargeboards. This typical nineteenth-century ornament marks the distinction between a wooden box and a residence.

Most important, the cottage emphasizes its wood construction. The traditional clapboard siding enlivens the surface with its characteristic texture which is well proportioned to the scale of the cottage.

The popularity of this type of wood construction—together with Mrs. O'Leary's cow—proved a catastrophe for Chicago. After the fires of 1871 and 1874, laws were passed which banned forever the use of the balloon frame within the city limits. Frame residences in Mid-North, therefore, date no later than 1874, the year the fire boundaries were extended to Fullerton Avenue. A few frame residences in the District had survived the Chicago Fire of 1871.

With the ban on wooden buildings, brick (both common brick and face brick) predominated as building materials. Some limestone and sandstone fronts also appear in the District. In many instances these early brick buildings resembled the cottage in design. As density increased and Mid-North began to take on its present character, masonry buildings were built larger and lost their similarity to the cottage.

Two basic forms of masonry building predominate in Mid-North: the flat front and the bay front. The difference is simply that the flat fronts have a simple flat facade, while the bay fronts have a bay window running the full height of the building. Otherwise, both share similar proportions, scale, color and texture. Details vary from building to building. Flat fronts tend to date from a slightly earlier period than bay fronts. These residential types are typical of the kind of housing which characterized American cities at the turn of the century. Flat fronts and bay fronts were employed both for single family residences and for apartment buildings.

Like the cottage, the flat and bay fronts rest upon a high ground-floor foundation, sometimes of stone but more often of brick. Broad flights of steps connect the sidewalk and first floor levels. The entrance is placed at either the right or left side of the first floor and next to the entrance are two windows (in the flat front) or a polygonal bay (in the bay front). A later variation places a larger tripartite window into a rectangular bay. This type of window consists of a large, fixed pane of glass in the center section. Window and door openings are frequently spanned by sandstone lintels. These lintels are sometimes decorated with incised patterns, often of a rosette design. Less frequently, full, segmental, or flat brick arches span the window and door openings. Window sills are usually sandstone.

The window and door openings on the first floor establish a regular grid-like pattern which is repeated on the floors above to give unity to the whole facade. Further unity comes from the similarity of the tall, narrow proportions of the openings and the overall proportions of the buildings.

The ceiling heights of these buildings are greater than those of contemporary structures. Often the first floor is ten or twelve feet high and succeeding stories become shorter. Stringcourses frequently mark these divisions on the facade. When these stringcourses are of a material which contrasts in color and texture to the surrounding wall, they create variety and texture in the facade. Almost invariably, ornate cornices detailed with dentils and brackets top these structures.

The basic flat and bay fronts date from the late 1870s and early 1880s. Innumerable variations on these two building types appear throughout Mid-North. Sometimes they are quite simple, at other times quite elaborate.

Later residences are marked by a greater variety of surface color and detail. Contrasting stringcourses become more common and terra-cotta ornament and glazed tiles lend further variety to these later facades. The town houses of the 1880s and 1890s become more elaborate when ornament derived from the fashionable revival styles is applied to the facades. Italianate, Queen Anne, and Richardsonian Romanesque were the styles most frequently drawn upon; Gothic Revival and Second Empire details

are also occasionally found in Mid-North. The total effect of the building is emphasized so that quite often details from more than one style appear on the same facade.

TO PRESERVE, REPAIR, RESTORE, RECONSTRUCT

The art of building has undergone drastic changes since the development of Mid-North. Indoor plumbing, central heating, and electricity were for the most part new inventions when Mid-North was being built. These mechanical systems have long since been improved and standardized. Bricks and mortar, plastered walls, double-hung windows, full basements, well-settled foundations, and overhanging eaves were tried and true building components in the late nineteenth century. For centuries, masons and carpenters had been well versed in their application.

The extent of today's mechanization and pre-fabrication in the building trades were only hinted at by the end of the nineteenth century. Bricks had been fabricated since before Roman times. Iron parts were factory milled during the 1880s. The method of merchandising via the catalogue, as pioneered by Joseph Sears and Montgomery Ward for dry goods, was applied to building materials during the latter part of the last century. Items such as pressed brick imprinted with patterns, terra-cotta moldings, and lintel stones with incised designs appeared in builder's journals, as did complete facade designs. These details appear throughout the Mid-North District today.

More often, on-the-site methods of construction were employed in Mid-North. The skills of the craftsmen in the building trades more than made up for deficiencies in pre-fabrication techniques.

Many of these materials and building methods have fallen into disuse today, making it difficult to obtain replacements for these traditional materials or craftsmen who are skilled in the original construction methods. This scarcity of materials and craftsmen makes preservation preferable to repair, restoration and reconstruction. It is preferred as a more direct means of maintaining the architectural character of Mid-North's facades, and, since materials and skills have become more scarce, the preservation of original work often decreases the expense and practical problems of upkeep in the area. Fortunately these well-constructed residences have been passed down today for the most part in good physical condition. They tend to suffer more from misdirected remodelling than from any weakness in the original construction. However there are cases where deterioration has gone beyond the point where preservation is an alternative and more drastic approaches become necessary.

As stated earlier, it would be unfortunate to be dogmatic about approaching renewal efforts in Mid-North. The variety of building types, styles and details further preclude such an approach. Guidelines can be offered, however, to help determine the basis from which improvements should proceed. These guidelines are based upon the principles which governed the original design and construction. They should be taken in light of the dictum of the National Trust for Historic Preservation that it is "better to preserve than repair, better to repair than restore, better to restore than reconstruct."

BUILDING MATERIALS

FRAME CONSTRUCTION

Upkeep and repair As a result of Chicago's harsh climate, frame structures weather more severely and rapidly than do masonry ones. More care must be given to the regular upkeep of wood. This basically involves periodic cleaning and repainting. Before repainting, it is a good idea to scrape down and sand old painted surfaces. No one color can be considered most appropriate for frame structures. However, a light color rather than a dark color is more

likely to preserve the horizontal lines created by the play of shadow over the overlapping clapboard siding.

Rotted sections of clapboard should be replaced with new clapboard as soon as possible to prevent the spread of deterioration to the remaining siding. Particular care should be given to ornamental woodwork on the eaves and around the window and door openings. Because these details are exposed, they tend to deteriorate more rapidly if left unrepaired. Their replacement can be expensive.

Resurfacing Wood clapboard siding should be used if resurfacing is necessary. Asphalt siding and asbestos shingles destroy the texture of the cottage facade and seriously detract from its architectural character. Aluminum siding, although made to look like clapboard, is often improperly proportioned. Clapboard traditionally is not more than four inches wide. If aluminum siding is wider than this, its use can destroy the texture of the building. Its use also obscures the moldings and details which add to the charm of these structures. If new siding is added, its proportions should be similar to those of the original clapboard. All elements, such as corner pieces and window trim, should be similarly proportioned.

MASONRY CONSTRUCTION

A wide variety of masonry building materials are employed in Mid-North. The most common of these is brick. On some of the earlier residences in the District common brick was used as a facing material. Later residences usually employ face brick, a red-orange, twice-fired brick. Stone facing materials were also used. Sandstone, for example, was often used for lintels, sills, and stringcourses on brick buildings. Occasionally, sandstone was used structurally as well. Other stones used structurally (that is, as building blocks) are limestone, granite, and other hard stones.

Upkeep and cleaning Both stone and brick are porous materials. They darken with time as their surfaces absorb dirt and other pollutants. Cleaning stone and brick will restore the original color. The method used for cleaning is best determined by the type of brick or stone. Sandblasting works well with hard stones such as granite, but its abrasive action is harmful to softer materials such as sandstone, limestone, and most bricks. The abrasive action of sand under pressure against these softer materials fractures and erodes their surfaces, causing much of the material and detail to wear. Sandblasting further harms these materials by exposing additional surface to weathering.

Steamcleaning is a non-abrasive method better suited to cleaning softer materials. It thoroughly cleans the stonework without damage to the surface; thus retaining the crispness of detail characteristic of much of the stonework in Mid-North. Stonework that has been damaged can and should be patched. Sandstone and limestone can be appropriately repaired with cement that has been tinted to the original color of the stone. Stone and brickwork should be kept well tuckpointed.

Tuckpointing Brick and stone are commonly laid between narrow mortar joints often no more than 1/8 inch in thickness. The mortar is often tinted a reddish-brown to harmonize with brick and contrast with stone. The joints are generally raked back slightly from the brick surface, highlighting the brick patterns with shadow. Tuckpointing becomes necessary when the old mortar decays and dislodges from the joints. Tuckpointing strengthens the bonding of brick and stone and prevents the building from absorbing moisture. Raking the joints protects the mortar by reducing its exposure to weathering. Tuckpointing should always respect the original character of the brick and stone work.

Resurfacing Resurfacing of stone and brick with imitation stone, artificial brick, etc., should be strictly avoided.

Application of these materials causes irreparable damage to the masonry work underneath. Resurfacing is not a permanent solution, for in time it will crack and flake off. It is expensive, yet substitutes a poor quality surface for one more durable and honest.

Painting Brick and stone structures are, in general, best left unpainted. Painting masonry involves expensive repainting and does little to protect the masonry surface. The polychrome effect created by contrasting sills, lintels, and stringcourses is obscured by painting. Painting can also physically damage stone when it is absorbed into the porous surface.

When these painted surfaces crack and peel, the old paint cannot properly be removed. Sandblasting will damage the stone while steam-cleaning does not remove old paint adequately.

Common brick used as facing lends itself to painting more than face brick. Common brick was used as facing for reasons of economy and quite often it was laid less carefully than face brick. If painting is necessary as a last resort, a variety of earth color paints are available which are well suited for these buildings. Before applying paint to a brick surface, it is best to seal the surface by applying a special silicate material recently available.

BUILDING COMPONENTS

Building components such as door and window openings help define the scale and proportion of the structure. Tall and narrow window and door openings emphasize the verticality of most of the buildings in Mid-North. Cornices and stringcourses create a secondary, horizontal rhythm. The relationships between the shape and size of these elements should be maintained wherever possible as they constitute an important part of the architectural character of Mid-North.

Window openings The vertical window openings in Mid-North quite often are close to ceiling height. On the facade they are framed at top and bottom by a lintel or arch and a sill.

The importance of the shape and size of window openings and their relationship to facade designs in Mid-North cannot be over-emphasized. Filling in or otherwise altering the shape and size of the openings drastically alters the composition of the facade and destroys the integrity of the whole. Openings should neither be enlarged nor made smaller as it is extremely difficult to match the materials and workmanship of the original wall.

Windows Most of the original windows in Mid-North are double-hung. Their wooden sashes are often curved at the top. The frames are sometimes detailed with a rolled molding, further enhancing the window design. As this type of frame molding has to be custom made today, they are extremely difficult and costly to replace. Old woodwork should be retained wherever possible; it is part of the overall variety of detail which is an important part of late nineteenth-century design. This woodwork should be kept well repaired to prevent serious deterioration. A wood double-hung sash is best suited for replacement of a deteriorated sash. Frames and sash generally look best a dark color.

Window panes Most windows in Mid-North are divided one over one; that is, the upper and lower sections of a double-hung window each have only one pane of glass. Many of these windows might originally have been divided two over two; that is, the upper and lower sections each contain two panes of glass separated by a narrow vertical mullion. The Colonial treatment of six over six and other smaller divisions are foreign to the window designs of Mid-North and should be avoided. If the window divisions must be changed, it is better to simplify (going from two over two to one over one) rather than complicate their arrangement. Glass blocks are, of course, totally out of character.

Transoms often appear over larger window openings and are frequently glazed with stained or cut leaded glass. It is desirable to retain the original transoms and outside expert help should be sought in the repair of original glass.

Storm windows Storm windows are an innovation which postdates most Mid-North residences. Today they are invaluable in insulating against Chicago's extreme climate. Their application to older buildings is a sure way of reducing heating bills and avoiding drafts. Most contemporary storm windows are made from aluminum channel. Storm windows with a raw aluminum finish are least desirable in Mid-North, as the shiny metal clashes with traditional building materials, brick and stone. Anodized aluminum or aluminum with a baked enamel finish are best suited to the facades of Mid-North. Storm windows should be simply detailed so as not to overpower the detailing of the window frame.

Shutters Shutters are inconsistent with the original facade designs of most masonry residences in Mid-North and their use should be discouraged. Shutters were used only on some of the wood cottages in the area. In most masonry buildings, the wall planes between window openings are too narrow to allow for shutters, which are properly one half the width of the window. Narrower shutters, used decoratively rather than functionally, are poorly scaled to the facade designs. They tend to look pasted on and do nothing more than obscure much of the original wall surface and destroy the general proportions of the windows.

Door openings Door openings are likewise integral parts of the facades' design. Originally the entrance was placed at a high first-floor level. Today that level is often considered the second floor and the entrance is on the ground floor. Wherever possible the entrance should be kept at the original level. A tall flight of steps leading to the first floor is a distinctive characteristic of many Mid-North residences. The entry is set in a somewhat wide opening which nevertheless retains a vertical emphasis. The lintel or arch over the door opening is aligned with the window openings of the first floor.

Doors Double doors were often used in Mid-North. Usually of solid wood, they were often panelled in geometric patterns or had panels of glass in the upper half. Above the door is a transom glazed with stained or cut leaded glass and frequently decorated with the house number. (House numbers on the North Side were changed around 1910, which accounts for the discrepancy with the present numbering system.) In the daytime this transom lit the entrance foyer and at night provided light to the front stoop.

Alterations Wherever possible, the original entry should be retained. When this is not possible, alternate arrangements exist. If the entrance has to be moved to the ground floor, the original doors can be replaced with glass doors and the original entrance treated as a balcony. Another effective treatment is to glaze the original door opening with a large sheet of plate glass which retains the original relationship of transom to door area. When the entrance is placed at the ground floor level, the opening should be of similar width and aligned with the original above.

Storm doors Storm doors and screens are a problem in Mid-North residences. Most of these homes were built with an entrance foyer which effectively insulated the interior. If screens are used, it is best to avoid the aluminum variety. Simple wood framed screens which extend the full height of the door opening are best. Storm doors with a raw aluminum finish are best avoided; anodized aluminum or an aluminum with a baked enamel finish are more compatible with the facade designs of Mid-North.

Stairways and porches Mid-North residences did not commonly have porches. The entry opened directly onto a stoop with a broad flight of steps to the sidewalk. These steps were of wood or stone and had iron handrails. Wherever possible the original steps should be retained. If replacement is necessary, similar materials should be used and detailing should be kept simple, resembling the original treatment.

Where porches did exist, they were constructed of wood. Often made of turned posts and spindles, they are generally rather small. Their roofs display a variety of hip and gable forms. These porches should be retained in their original form. They were designed to compliment the facade and lend interesting detail to the entrance. When removed, they leave marks on the building surface where they were attached.

Porches should not be enclosed. This makes them too bulky, destroying their slender forms and concealing doorway details. A few porches of later vintage appear in Mid-North. Generally of masonry, they tend to be too massive, seriously detracting from the proportions of the facades.

ORNAMENT

Ornament played an important part in the building designs of the late nineteenth century. Some Victorian buildings had such an abundance of ornamental detail that the negative term "Gingerbread" was long used to describe them. Although the residences of Mid-North are not as exuberant in their display of ornament as residences elsewhere, they are marked by a variety of interesting detail.

The average Mid-North residence was not cluttered with details in the same manner that afflicted much furniture design of the period. Ornament was sparse and was always balanced against a very hard-edge treatment of the wall plane. Major ornament was associated with functional parts of the building—the cornice and the lintels, for example. Here molded brick, terra cotta, glazed tile, glass and metal ornament was applied to create a decorative effect by complementing and contrasting with the building materials employed.

CORNICE

The most basic ornamental feature is the cornice, which can be found on almost all of the residences in Mid-North. Formally terminating the vertical thrust of these buildings, and detailed in variations of Classical brackets and dentils, cornices are constructed of wood, sheet metal, brick, and terra cotta.

Upkeep and maintenance Unfortunately cornices are particularly vulnerable to weathering. Their materials (especially wood and sheet metal) need to be well sealed in order to prevent decay. They should be kept well repaired and painted. Some cornices are made of sheet copper which, unlike other metals, forms a protective cover; the patina caused by oxidation is light gray-green in color and needs no paint.

Replacement The removal of cornices is most regrettable and seriously damages the facade design. Unfortunately, a few cornices have been removed and replaced by simple parapet walls. This solution diminishes the vigor of the designs. If a cornice has decayed beyond repair, it should be replaced with a similar cornice-like detail. Wood moldings or pressed sheet metal can be used for this purpose. Fiber glass replacements have been used successfully in recent years. Fiber glass is impervious to weathering and, when properly finished, closely resembles the original design and material. A fiber glass cornice has recently been installed on the Lathrop House (the Fortnightly Club) at 120 East Bellevue. The supporting framework for such a cornice should be of incombustible material.

LINTELS, ARCHES, AND SILLS

Lintels and arches in a wide variety of designs were used to span window and door openings in Mid-North. Lintels are solid blocks of stone (usually sandstone) and are often incised with geometric patterns based on plant forms. Arches are flat, segmental, or round; are made of brick or stone, sometimes both; and are generally corbelled or rusticated. Sills, which protect the masonry below window and door openings, are usually stone. These elements generally contrast in material, color, and texture to the surrounding wall planes. This contrast is essential to the character of Mid-North, as it creates rhythms which carry throughout the area.

Lintels, arches, and sills should be kept clean and well repaired, using methods similar to those for other masonry surfaces. Paint obscures their designs and destroys the contrasts. Since they are no longer manufactured, replacement is difficult. In one restoration, new lintel and sill stones were needed, as the original windows had been altered and the lintels and sills removed. This restoration was accomplished by using large blocks of cut stone similarly proportioned to the originals and simply detailed. This solution has restored the windows very effectively.

BRICK AND TERRA COTTA MOLDINGS

These once-standard materials are no longer generally available. Fortunately, both materials wear well. They are almost impossible to replace (the salvage yard may be the possible source for replacements). They were used on cornices, stringcourses, and as decorative panels; their designs are usually much more fluid than the incised patterns on lintel stones. Glazed tiles also appear as decorative panels on some Mid-North residences. These are minor details which add an immense richness to the facades of Mid-North. They should be retained intact.

STAINED AND CUT LEADED GLASS

These elements, as mentioned earlier, are mainly reserved for transoms over larger windows and doorways. They employ a variety of geometric and natural forms. It is not impossible to repair leaded glass, although it generally takes more skill than a do-it-yourself project. Outside help should be sought.

METAL WORK

Metal was used for a variety of ornament in Mid-North. Most fences and railings are of cast-iron, as are roof finials. Bays and oriels are often clad in sheet metal and this same material is used to trim gables, gutters, and downspouts. Metal brackets and grilles are also found in the area.

FENCES

Cast-iron picket fences set upon stone curbings are prevalent in Mid-North. The pickets are slender cast-iron rods ornamented with various knobs and foliate designs. The fences are very light and delicate and enclose the front lawns without obscuring the buildings behind them. They should be retained wherever they have survived. Fencing of this period can sometimes be obtained at salvage yards or demolition sites. Iron fences were painted (black) to protect against corrosion. A good modern substitute in cases where the original fence no longer exists, is a low, vertical picket fence of slender iron rods with a simple rail at top. Although City Ordinance allows fences to be solid and as high as seven feet, this type of fencing is not appropriate to Mid-North front yards. Brick and stone walls obscure too much of the building facades and were not originally used in the area. They also detract from the uniform setbacks of the original buildings.

Fence-type railings were sometimes used to adorn the ridges of roofs, and metal finials were used on roof peaks.

These elements should be retained wherever they have survived.

HANDRAILS

Handrails for front stairways are generally composed of two parallel pipes of iron anchored into the building at the top and supported by ornate cast-iron newel posts at bottom with one or two intervening supports. They are simply detailed and painted (black) to protect the iron. These handrails should be retained. Much of the wrought-iron produced today is too ornate for the more simple Victorian treatment. If replacement is warranted, railings similar in design to the fencing mentioned earlier is appropriate.

ORIELS

Oriels are projecting windows similar to bay windows except that they do not extend to the ground but instead are cantilevered out beyond the building line. They are generally clad in sheet metal (otherwise in wood) imprinted with geometric designs. These designs articulate the frames of the windows. Sheet metal can be repaired. If properly maintained and painted to protect it from rusting, it wears well.

Other metal details, such as downspouts, gutters, and trim should be similarly maintained—that is, well painted to prevent corrosion.

ROW HOUSES AND DUPLEXES

Row houses and duplexes should be treated as they were originally intended—as units. Generally these groupings are composed of a single unit simply repeated over the length of the row. Sometimes they are more elaborate, with designs varied from unit to unit. The various owners of a row-house group would be well advised to cooperate on planing building maintenance. This would allow for a cohesive treatment of the whole and, by contracting to one person for such upkeep, would lessen the expenses per unit.

AIR CONDITIONING

The best solution is the installation of central air conditioning. Failing that, air conditioning units should be placed at the sides or rear of Mid-North's residences whenever possible. Placing such units on the facades detracts from their design. If there is no alternative to such placement, a window unit, mounted flush with the exterior wall, should be used rather than a through-the-wall unit, as it does not directly affect the structure. Creating holes in the facades will result in serious problems. Such holes can never be properly patched when the units are no longer needed.

In the end, preservation amounts to little more than proper building maintenance, an economic and aesthetic expedient to conserving the Mid-North District.

For further reference

There are a number of helpful books and periodicals available to the homeowner for planning and executing repairs and renovations. A few of special interest are:

Buying and Renovating a House in the City: A Practical Guide. Deirdre Stanforth and Martha Stamm. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972. 428 pp., paperback, b/w illus., append., index.

The Care of Old Buildings Today: A Practical Guide. Donald Insall. London: The Architectural Press, 1972. 197 pp., hardbound, b/w illus., bibl.

How To Renovate a Brownstone. William H. Edgerton, et al. New York: Halsey Publishing, 1970. 373 pp., paperback, b/w illus., bibl.

Remodeling Old Houses Without Destroying Their Character. George Stephen. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972. 244 pp., paperback, b/w illus., gloss., append., index.

The Restoration Manual. Orin M. Bullock, Jr. Norwalk, Conn.: Silvermine Publishers, 1966. 181 pp., hardbound, b/w illus., gloss., bibl.

The Old House Journal.
Published monthly by The Old House Journal Company, 199 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11217.

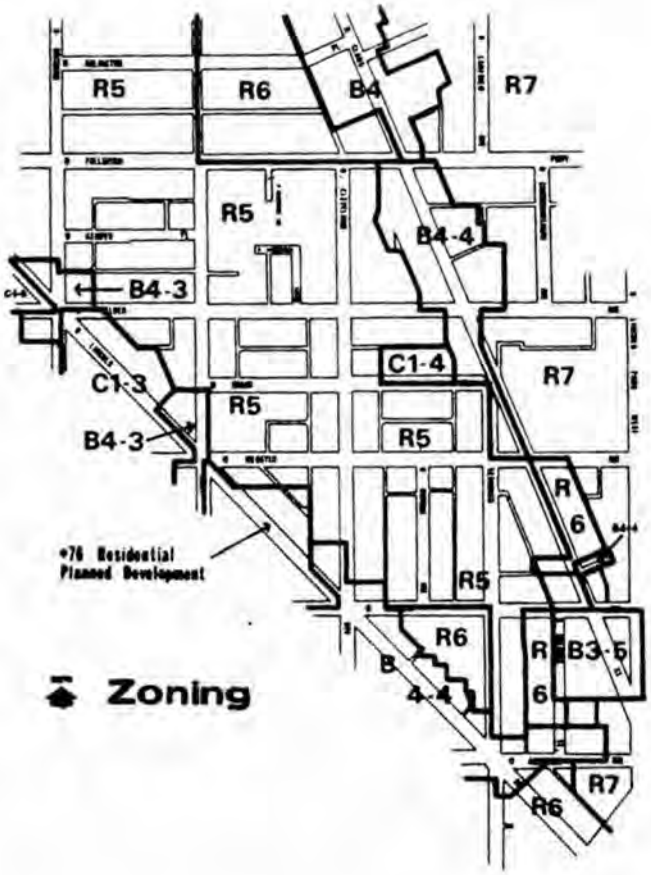
List courtesy of The National Trust for Historic Preservation.

APPENDIX:
ZONING IN MID-NORTH

Zoning laws regulate land use. They specify whether an area can be used for residential, business, commercial, or manufacturing purposes or any combination thereof; they also specify the sizes and heights of buildings and the amount of space between them, the population density, and other related factors.

Residential districts are designated with an "R" followed by a number which indicates the density and special uses allowed in the area. The range is from R-1, which basically permits only single-family construction and consequently a low density, to R-8, which allows maximum high-rise construction and consequently a high density. Most of the proposed Mid-North District (about 93 percent) is designated R-5, which allows a relatively high population concentration and a variety of uses, including apartments and hotels as well as institutional and public facilities. A very small portion (about 4 percent of the total area) is designated R-6, which permits the construction of larger buildings and consequently allows a greater density than in an R-5 area.

The remainder of the District (approximately 3 percent) is designated as B-4, which is a "Restricted Service District," permitting use of land for business and various service facilities. Only a few lots (less than one percent of the total) are designated as C-1, which permits various commercial and business uses as well as small-scale manufacturing.



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Credits

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